

The Sharing of Practice: Fun and Easy Teaching and Learning of Listening and Speaking

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Abstract: *This study discussed on the action plan done on a group of non-English option teachers who were not so familiar in the approaches and skills in teaching the language. Assisting the non-English option teachers in the development of listening comprehension was a very big challenge. It was a challenge that demands both the trainer's and the trainee's attention because of the critical role that listening plays, not only in communication, but also in the acquisition of language. It was a kind of intervention to give those teachers some useful guideline in carry out the listening and speaking lessons as required in Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR). Teaching listening and speaking is the first important part in a cycle of lessons in a modular concept for the new standard of the curriculum. The action plan was carried out in form of a workshop with those 39 teachers who representing 39 primary schools in the district. It was a sharing session with them on how to carry out the fun and easy teaching and learning in the classroom. The Fun Teaching and Learning (Listening and Speaking) workshop was just like a starting point or a platform for the teachers to get and to increase their knowledge in successfully conducting their teaching. The suggested teaching and learning strategies and the activities for classroom teaching and learning had been included. They were encouraged to use their own initiative to plan stimulating and enjoyable lessons suitable to their pupils' level*

Keywords: *Fun teaching, Modular concept, Non-English option*

1. Introduction

English is taught as a second language in all Malaysian primary and secondary schools. The mastery of English is essential for pupils to gain access to information and knowledge written in English. That is why the development in teaching the language had been organized and improvised from time to time by the Ministry of Education. The School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+) is a new post in it. I was appointed as one of them since last year and was posted in the district of Pasir Puteh, Kelantan. Before that, I was a master teacher and used to be the master trainer for the primary school English teachers throughout Kelantan. I involved in many courses under the district, the state and at national level. I also have 9 years of experience as an examiner for English (*Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah*) UPSR paper. Other than that, in 2008, I was a module writer for English Year 6 Module for *Skim Baucer Tuisyen (SBT)* at the National level. Since then, I actively involved as a modules writer for English Primary Year 6 for Kelantan state.

As the master trainer for English (*Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah*) KSSR for many years, I was so concern and felt responsible towards the teachers understanding and how far they could accept this new curriculum and implement it in their classrooms. I enjoyed visiting the schools, got to know many teachers and shared many things about the teaching and the problems they faced. During my visits to schools, I found that many of them still didn't understand on the whole idea and the modular concept of this new standard curriculum. And so sad to say here that, many of them were not the English-option teachers. They taught English because they were ordered to do so by the school administrative because

the school didn't have enough English teachers. So, they were lack of everything regarding the teaching of English language.

So, lacking of the knowledge in teaching the language, I took it as a major issue here to be discussed in this action plan. Actually these teachers were the trained teachers who are very good and presentable in their own field. They had their skills in teaching based on their option taught but not in teaching English. For example, one of the experiences that I had during my visits to school, when I was asked by the teacher herself to be in her classroom during her teaching, I was very surprised to see the way she taught the students. Just imagine a teacher teaches English using a local dialect. It was hard to believe but that was the real situation happened in many of the schools here. In the present EFL classroom, the teaching of listening and speaking relies heavily on the language labs and tape recorders. The main reason for this is that most EFL teachers are non-native English speakers and thus may lack proficiency in English (Hajiyeva, 2010). Based on that, I realised it was a very serious issue and I chose to work on it in order to give those teachers some knowledge and provide them with ideas on how to carry out the teaching in the classrooms and make them aware of what they need to know about the language teaching. As trainers we need to help them and may be to force them to step outside of their comfort zone that never helped them learn to speak a language when they were at school and to do things completely differently. As stated by Lily Wong Fillmore and Catherine E. Snow (2000), today's teachers need access to a wide range of information to function well in the classroom. The challenge of providing excellent teacher preparation and on-going professional development for teachers is enormous at any time.

2. The Action Plan

What I planned to do in this task is to carry out a one day workshop with the non-English option teachers in my district because so many of English teachers here were the non-English option teachers with various skills and qualities. As studies shown, teacher quality is an important factor in determining gains in student achievement, even after accounting for prior student learning and family background characteristics (Guerriero, 2012). So those teachers were from various teaching backgrounds but I chose only 39 teachers from 39 schools. They were called to the District Training Centre for that workshop. Actually, this is a collaborative work with the English language officer in the district. He was the one who did all the clerical works and on my part I worked on the workshop contents. The workshop focused only on the listening and speaking skills. It was called Fun Teaching and Learning (Listening and Speaking) Workshop. I chose Listening and Speaking skills to be developed in this first workshop because they are essential for those teachers to begin with basic literacy skills in order to build a strong foundation of language skills. In teaching and learning the language the basic listening and speaking should be introduced and trained in order to help them enrich their understanding of the language. The fun teaching and learning part were highlighted there to make them aware that the teaching and learning are definitely fun, meaningful and purposeful. ESL teachers have the opportunity to help adult ESL learners practice listening and speaking in the safe environment of the classroom (Miller, 2010).

There were three main slots in the workshop schedule (Appendix 1). The first slot was the introduction part to tell them the concept of listening and speaking. I did the activity by giving them the very simple instructions and the activity started with the ice-breaking session. It was the shouting game which I think very interesting and really enjoyed by the teachers. They got to know each other and at the same time they were forced to open their mouth and to shout in fun way. Then, followed with the explanation on why English is taught as a second language in all Malaysian primary and secondary schools. How important is

their roles as English teachers. Let them see the goal of the English language curriculum and how it could help pupils acquire the language in order to help them use it in their daily lives, to further their studies, and for work purposes. After that, some information on the new standard curriculum (KSSR) was explained to them including the aims, objectives and the modular concept in the teaching and learning. The purpose is to give a general view on what is stressed in the curriculum and their role as the teachers were to provide opportunities for pupils to question, to give responses to what they heard or learnt and even to evaluate texts that they listen to, read or view. The further explanation is on the concept of listening and speaking. Asked them some questions about their own experience in order to shaped their believe that their own experiences are also the source of knowledge for their teaching.

The second slot was Fun and Meaningful Activities for Listening and Speaking. The teachers were introduced to 5 selected activities (Appendixes 2 – 6) They were provided with a note on how to carry out the activities and the materials and worksheets needed. After that, they were divided into 5 groups and each group will do one activity for the listening and speaking lesson. Later on in slot 3, those 5 groups presented their activities. They will be commented on the strength and weaknesses of the activities by the other members of the floor. They also will have to think of the purposes of the activities and a few points on it will be introduced to them such as:

1. get feeling activity
2. get acquainted to each other
3. get to know
4. non-verbal

During the workshop, I was not only giving them all the necessary inputs but I also entertained all the questions asked by them because I want them to really understand on what they should do in their practice when they go back to the schools. I also give them a list of instructional language or the classroom commands that they could use in their classrooms (Appendix 7). In fact, I did one activity with them when I distributed those notes. I made them listened and followed my instructions in making a 'hot-dog-book' (appendix 8). It was so fun and they really enjoyed it. At the end of the workshop, I gave them a yellow form (Appendix 9) just to get some information on what they understand about the teaching of listening and speaking. In that form they were required to give feedbacks on the overall content of the workshop.

Listening is a demanding process, not only because of the complexity of the process itself, but also due to factors that characterize the listener, the speaker, the content of the message, and any visual support that accompanies the message (Brown & Yule, 1983). So, as the trainer, we need to make the teachers ready and very well prepared in doing the teaching. It was a great challenge for me as the trainer because those selected teachers are the non-English option teachers. I need to be a good model for them on how to do the listening and speaking activities.

Other than that, it is important for all teachers to understand the theories and methods that underlie and support the techniques and materials recommended in the classroom teaching. This knowledge will enable them to feel secure and confident with the activities they will carry out in their classrooms. It will also allow them to be creative or in other words, teachers who are knowledgeable with the methods, the activities or may be of the theory are more likely to adapt and create materials to suit the needs of the students they have in front of them. Here are three major theories, Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach, the Communicative Approach, and the Whole Language Approach, have influenced the

development of this curriculum guide. Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach and the Communicative Approach have been developed from research in the field of second language acquisition in the last fifteen years. The Whole Language Approach was developed from research in the areas of reading and writing in English as a first language. These three approaches have made great contributions to the field of teaching English as a second language and have been found to complement one another (see underlying principles in this guide). Nevertheless, the subtle differences among the three approaches have given this guide flexibility and versatility. Principles quoted here from each one of these approaches will be presented with an implication for the classroom. This theoretical input should have an enriching effect on teaching.

After a week I managed to go to the 6 schools to get the feedbacks from the teachers. They were twelve of them out of twenty participants from the workshop. All of them did the activities in their classrooms and they were quite happy with the students' participation in the classrooms. Nine of them carried out only one activity for one lesson of listening and speaking and the other three managed to do two activities in one hour lesson. I got some feedbacks from the teachers on the activities they did. I was using the Teacher Coaching Tool (TCT) – (Appendix 10) during the discussion at the schools.

3. Strengths and Limitation

The Fun Teaching and Learning (Listening and Speaking) workshop was just like a starting point or a platform for the teachers to get and to increase their knowledge in conducting their teaching. The suggested teaching and learning strategies and activities for classroom teaching and learning had been included. It was hoped that the teachers will gain some useful ideas to help them carry out their daily lessons. However, teachers were also encouraged not to rely solely on those suggested activities only when planning lessons. They were encouraged to use their own creativity and initiative to plan stimulating and enjoyable lessons suitable to their pupils' level. So, it was good when the teachers were so cooperative and willingly to do all the activities assigned to them. Other than that, they wanted to more workshops in future for the other language skills.

The limitation only on the time constrain. In two weeks' time of conducting this task, I managed to go to only six schools and getting the feedbacks from only twelve teachers. Actually I have 39 primary schools in my district. To gather all the selected teachers from those schools for a one day workshop will not be a big problem but to go to all schools for the feedbacks and reflections will take more a month.

4. Reflections

I was quite satisfied with the overall process in conducting this task. The suggested activities provided are merely suggestions and teachers are free to improvise and adapt accordingly to the level and suitability of their pupils. All the activities selected for this workshop were very easy to conduct and understand by the teachers. So, the teacher felt confident in practicing them in their classrooms. But still, in future a lot more of initiative, imagination and creativity are needed by teachers in planning their lessons in order to extend the experiences of their pupils. The approaches introduced to the teachers still need to be guided depending on their understanding and proficiency levels. The challenges for those teachers as they were the non-English option teacher were to find ways to help themselves first with the understanding of the concept, skills and to have better fluency in using the language before they could think of finding the appropriate strategies in helping their students develop fluency, accuracy and appropriateness of language used.

Other than that, teachers also need to be exposed very well to the needs in the new standard curriculum documents (KSSR) which are based on the modular approach. From the observations and feedbacks, they were not really understanding with the flow (modular concept) they need to follow in conducting the lessons. This modular approach does not exclude integration of skills. Modules are increasingly being used in many countries as a way of organizing a language curriculum (Sadiq, Zamir, 2014). However, skills integration is exploited strategically to enhance pupils' development of specific and specified language skills as described in the content and learning standards in a module. The trainer need to keep on supporting them to do and to come out with many more interesting activities in their lessons and hence improve their English language proficiency.

5. Conclusion

As we knew, the listening and speaking skill is crucial for communication at home, at school, as well as in the community. However, this skill is often neglected or given minimal emphasis during English language lessons. In order to develop this skill, teachers have to provide their pupils with various opportunities to listen and to talk about a range of subjects which may include topics on personal interests, school work and even current affairs. It is hoped that the learning standards will offer teachers some ideas on how they could provide opportunities for pupils to engage in various listening and speaking activities (Primary School Standard Curriculum, 2011)

Assisting the non-English option teachers in the development of listening comprehension was a very big challenge. It was a challenge that demands both the trainer's and the trainee's attention because of the critical role that listening plays, not only in communication, but also in the acquisition of language. Knowledge of the listening process and factors that affect listening enable teachers to select or create listening texts and activities that meet the needs of the their students in schools. Teachers, then, must weave these listening activities into the curriculum to create a balance that mirrors the real-world integration of listening with speaking, reading, and writing.

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